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Appropriations Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

To whom it may concern:

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Fludiona Naka and I am a medical and public health student at UConn School of Medicine.

Allow me to begin by thanking all of you for the opportunity to speak before this committee, and for your continued support of UConn Health. I am writing to you as a Connecticut resident, a UConn student, and a future doctor planning to make my career here in the Nutmeg State.

I ask that you please do whatever you can to minimize cuts to UConn Health's funding. I fear that such reductions would negatively affect the care that countless patients around the state receive through this institution.

Before my journey in medicine began, I served two years with AmeriCorps. I was a referral specialist at Community Health Services Inc. in the North-end of Hartford, a Federally Qualified Health Center serving one of the poorest regions in CT. My role was to link patients to specialty care by scheduling their appointments. Like most FQHCs, the vast majority of our patient population was either on Medicaid/Medicare or uninsured. All too often, the only place where I could get my patients in to see a specialist was UConn Health, unless they had private insurance of course, which very few did. When a patient of mine needed to see a cardiologist for the swelling in his legs, symptoms that could indicate heart failure, only UConn Health opened its doors to provide that care.

In addition to the impact that cuts to UConn Health would have on patients, I fear they will also negatively affect the education of future health professionals. Unequivocally, I can say that I have received the best possible education at UConn School of Medicine. I was not born in this country, but I consider myself a homegrown Connecticut girl because my family and I settled in Hartford when we first immigrated to the United States. I attended Bulkeley High School in Hartford and later earned my undergraduate degree at Wesleyan University before starting medical school. UConn, through the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs, has nourished me since long before I became a student of the school and helped me become the person I am today through mentorship and guidance. If deep budget cuts go into effect at UConn Health, who will reach out to boys and girls in Hartford, New Britain, and across the state to provide them a path for them to realize their dreams of becoming health care providers?

UConn has immensely supported me through the years, so after matriculating in the School of Medicine, I eagerly wanted to give back to the community, to pay it forward so to speak. So, I became a member of the Urban Service Track, a program of the CT Area Health Education Center (AHEC). Through the Urban Service Track, I have been able work with the neediest communities by providing health education and screenings, as well as, raising awareness of health careers for children/youth.

As a grateful resident, I implore you to think of the potential effect cuts will have to Connecticut's underserved communities, patients who receive health care at UConn Health, families seeking a quality education for their children, and finally students themselves - the future workforce of our state.

Thank you and please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Fludiona Naka